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## REPARATION

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THE belief in fate is as old as the history of man. It looms as a stupendous threat in the life of the savage, a dark influence challenging his every action with the menaces of taboo and totem. But we men and women of this twentieth century, with our knowledge of physics, our chemical theories of a mechanical cosmogony, our ready explanations of every natural and abnormal phenomenon, have won a partial freedom from the old slavery. We stand erect, defying the lightning of the gods and challenging the probability of any supernatural interference with the deliberate course of our ordered existences. We have new words for fate. We speak of chance, of coincidence, or, with a shrug of the shoulders, of luck. We look down with condescension at the feeble savage who cowers before the incomprehensible mandates of his intimate gods.

Even Angus Whitley himself, in these later successful days of his, has come to smile whimsically at the idea that he could have been driven by the direct interference of any supernormal influence. His blue eyes have lost their old expression of wondering speculation. He is a made man, happily married, happily employed, and he prefers to believe,

now, in chance or luck as the sole director of his destiny during those two years in which he worked his passage around the full circumference of the earth. He has almost forgotten, though I have not, the harried youngster of twenty-five who surged desperately through the streets of New York, hag-ridden by his furious urgency to end the amazing quest that was then speeding him to the close of his Odyssey.

But I remember his haunted face and the awed intonations of his voice when he first told me his story; and, while I cannot definitely assert that throughout those two adventurous years the spirit of Fuller Herbert stood at Whitley's elbow, prodding him on to complete his mission, I do claim that some deeper, more esoteric influence than luck must be postulated to account for the apparent coincidences. Chance? Yes; but what lies behind the appearance of chance?

Whitley, the young failure of twenty-three, was returning, temporarily defeated, from Cape Town to London, when the thing began. He had gone out eighteen months before as an engineer, and somehow failed to make good. One could find half a dozen reasons to ac-

count for his failure—his inexperience, his lack of influence, the conditions in South Africa—it was that uneasy period between the Jameson raid and the Boer War. There is no need in any case to assume that the blight had already settled upon him.

He had, it is true, known Fuller Herbert in Johannesburg, as everybody knew him—that is to say, very slightly. In all his seven years in South Africa Herbert had never come within sight of making a friend. He was a man apart from the other competitors in the diamond-market, respected both for his knowledge and his shrewdness, but passively disliked; until in the last six months of his stay that feeling was a trifle mitigated by a flavor of pity. Every one but himself knew that he was doomed, and he must have known it, subconsciously, though he fought against the realization until—for his own purposes—it was too late. His trouble was some complicated and rather mysterious disease of the liver, variously diagnosed by Cape Town specialists as due to tuberculosis and a malignant growth. Whatever it was, there can be no question that during his last days the disease very seriously affected his naturally eccentric mind.

He was a tall, thin man, with a long and prominent nose, a little spiteful mouth, and a small but noticeably aggressive chin. Even before the color of his skin turned to a high and bitter yellow he was remarkable for his ugliness. There was something medieval about it. He was like the incarnation of some revolting caricature by Rowlandson or Gilray.

Young Whitley ran across him in Cape Town the day before they sailed, and Herbert did what was for him an unprecedented thing—he made what seemed to be a very generous offer when he heard that Angus was going to travel third class.

"No, no," he said. "Don't do that. You're just the man I want—for a secretary on the voyage. I'm going home for

good. No end of stuff to settle up. I want some one badly."

In the surprise of the moment, Angus never thought of refusing. He did not like Fuller Herbert—no one did—but he anticipated no difficulty in putting up with him for three weeks as an employer. Moreover, there was a queer urgency about Fuller, then, that would brook no denial. He did nothing, he seemed to have nothing to do, but his actions and speech were those of a man who had a critical, even a vital, engagement, five minutes ahead—an engagement that was always waiting for him, that engrossed all his attention and never matured.

His air of expectation was not less marked on the boat; indeed, it was rather exaggerated. Angus's duties as secretary were purely imaginary. Herbert would take him down into his cabin in the morning and begin by making some pretense of business. He would stand by the port-hole—they steamed north through a flat calm until they had passed Las Palmas—and mutter to himself, as if collecting his thoughts. Occasionally a sentence or two would be addressed directly to Angus.

"There's a lot to be done," Herbert would say. "Everything ought to be rearranged. This afternoon . . ." Then his glance would wander out through the port-hole, over the diminished expanse of gleaming water, and he would add, absently, "This afternoon, perhaps—a few letters." It seemed as if that immense appointment must be waiting for him on the sky-line; that it might come in sight, now, at any minute.

Angus had his moments of uneasiness, at first. He was a conscientious lad, and he felt that he was not earning his passage. He even tried to make up for his idleness as secretary by offering his services as personal servant. But Herbert was obviously bothered by these attentions, and presently Angus settled down to doing nothing, with the consolation that it was not *his* fault. He was young; he was on his way home; he was going to

see the girl he was engaged to, after eighteen months' absence; and if he had any presentiment at all, it was that his luck would change, that he would get a job in England, that everything was going to be—all right.

Meanwhile Fuller Herbert's preoccupation increased with every day's run northward. The record of that run was, in fact, his sole interest. He never put into the sweep that the financiers continued to organize daily, despite the monotonous regularity of the readings, but he was invariably among the first to get the news. After that, he would stalk away to the quietest corner of the deck—it was too hot to go below—and watch out for that approaching crisis which might at any instant, one inferred, show itself on the horizon.

It was the day after passing Las Palmas that Fuller's reserve was suddenly broken. The boat was running, full steam, into an Atlantic gale. Angus had been in high spirits at dinner. His employer had not put in an appearance at that meal, but Angus's excitement was not due to any lack of restraint on that account, but rather to what seemed to him a welcome change after the deadly monotony of the weather during the earlier part of the trip. It pleased him to see the "fiddles" on the table, to anticipate a more than usually violent gale, to be taking part in some kind of adventure. He was talking eagerly about mining machinery to a man whose acquaintance he had recently made—a man who might be useful. Angus thought, congratulating himself on his worldly wisdom—when the steward summoned him to Herbert's cabin.

Herbert was in his bunk, lying on his side, and he did not open his eyes when Angus came in. For a minute, perhaps, Angus stood uncertainly awaiting his instructions. A sense of oppression and urgency had unexpectedly come to him as he entered that confined space. He laid a hand on the edge of the bunk to steady himself against the roll of the boat, which was getting the force of the

increasing gale full on her quarter. But it was not the roaring of the sea smashing now and again passionately at the dead-light that disconcerted him. That fury outside was the splendid, natural vigor of the elements, a revel in which he would willingly have joined. It was the tense, in some way rigid, atmosphere of the cabin that dismayed him. It seemed as if that repulsive yellow figure in the bunk was tremendously holding this one little bubble of his surroundings, starkly stiff and resistant against the whole tumult of the earth; as if by some incredible effort of will he was even defying the movement of time.

And when he spoke his words came from him with an effect both of effort and of restraint that bespoke a double purpose. There was something that had to be done, while with the better part of his will and attention he kept back the entire forces of the universe from prematurely thrusting upon him the pressure of that long-expected appointment he had so anxiously awaited.

"Can you hear, Whitley?" he began, still with his eyes closed, and the sound of his voice had a quality at once hard and shrill, like the twanging of a strained wire.

When Angus had reassured him he went on more rapidly, in broken, uneven sentences: "I've an important mission for you—a charge. Think of it as sacred—sacred. I shall know."

"What he meant by that 'I shall know' Angus did not pause to inquire. The sentence went straight down into his subconsciousness and stayed there for nearly two years. Only at the last did he wonder vaguely whether it were possible that Fuller could, indeed, have *known*?

"I knew a young woman—in England. I've written her name and address and put them inside the bag," Herbert continued. "All my fault—she was barely eighteen—and I couldn't forget—never could forget. . . . Good reasons—my brother—family. . . . Always wanted the family to think that I . . . My brother would make trouble—dis-

pute the will if I put her down in it. He mustn't know. I've been putting diamonds aside for her. They're all right. The receipts are in the bag. I saved them for her, here and there. She may have a child. The diamonds for them both. But my brother mustn't know. All my other papers in order. There's nothing to show. I meant to give them to her myself. I was going home for that. Reparation . . . to make reparation. Couldn't forget . . ."

Angus, clutching the edge of the bunk, heard every syllable spoken by Herbert. His thin, intense voice seemed to occupy the cabin and drive out the multitudinous clamor of the storm. When he stopped speaking, all the noise of the sea and the ship came back with the rush of a sudden cataract.

"But do you mean that you want me to . . ." Angus began, and was surprised to find that he had to shout in order to make himself heard.

Herbert opened his eyes for the first time, and with a quick jerk shot his hand under his pillow. He produced a small leather bag and tendered it to Angus.

"Diamonds," he said, in a relaxed voice that broke weakly against the tumult. Then, raising himself slightly on his elbows, he closed his eyes again and made one more heroic effort to stay the procession of time.

"A sacred trust for you," he said, in those former shrill tones that made Angus think of a fine escape of highly compressed air. "Sacred. I was afraid I might not—be strong enough—deliver it myself. Chose you—Cape Town—deliberately—in case. Diamonds for Sarah Browning and her child—my child. Deliver as soon as you reach England. Tell no one. No one. My brother raise objections. Go now. See you again in the morning—complete arrangements."

He sank back with a long sigh, as if the pressure had been removed and his balance with the universe restfully stabilized.

Angus slipped the leather bag into his hip pocket and left the cabin with the solemnity of one afraid of disturbing a religious ceremony. But as soon as he had closed the door behind him he remembered his social duty and hurried out the ship's doctor.

The doctor was in Herbert's cabin within a few minutes, but he was too late. Herbert had already gone to keep his appointment.

Angus Whitley's feeling with regard to his "sacred trust" when he landed at Southampton was mainly one of boredom. He should have been free to go to the girl he was engaged to and discuss their plans for the future; and instead of that he had to undertake a tedious journey to the Midlands to make this vicarious reparation. His one consolation was to be found in the romantic posings natural to his age and temperament. He saw himself definitely as the hero in the coming interview. He heard himself modestly disclaiming praise or reward. He came and showered amazing wealth on the head of Sarah Browning. He chose to picture her as a patient, beautiful woman, bowing her head to poverty and the slurs of evil reputation for the sake of her child—and when he had bestowed upon her the priceless gift of freedom he retired, unassuming, almost bashful, but with the consciousness of having been the chance instrument of her happiness. He rehearsed that scene until he grew tired of it, and then thanked Heaven that with this one mission his connection with Fuller Herbert's past was finally closed. For all Herbert's other affairs were in strict order—papers, will, instructions, the address of his lawyer in London and that of his brother in Devonshire. The captain of the boat had charge of that. Not even Angus's testimony was required. When he had delivered the fortune in uncut stones, secretly deducted by the testator from the Herbert inheritance, Angus's work was finished.

He was certainly eager to get the job

over. He had, as an offset to his romantic conception of himself as the delivering hero, an uneasy sense of doing something slightly illegal. He was aware of a new distrust of his fellow-travelers in the train that was taking him to the village home of the ill-used Sarah Browning. It is not every man of Angus's appearance who can afford to carry uncut diamonds to the value of perhaps a quarter of a million dollars in his hip pocket. If, by some unhappy accident, that hoard were discovered, Angus realized that he might find it difficult to account for his possession of that little leather bag.

Besides that condensed wealth, the bag contained nothing but the official receipts for the money paid for the stones — a certificate of legal buying — and Sarah Browning's name and address on a slip of paper. Herbert had cautiously omitted any legal instrument, such as a deed of gift, that would have involved the admission of a fourth person into the secret. At the last, when his disease had got hold of him, he had without question been suffering from some kind of obsession with regard to this act of reparation. He had even kept it from Angus, his chosen messenger, until the very hour of his august engagement had actually sounded. . . .

Angus arrived at the little village of Halton, four miles from the cathedral city of Medboro', in the early afternoon. Now that he had actually reached his goal, his doubts had momentarily slipped from him. As he made his way toward the village post-office, in order to discover the precise situation of Sarah Browning's house or cottage, he warmed again to his part of the glorious messenger.

The postmistress was a stout, communicative woman, with the inquisitive eyes of an official fully conscious of her importance in the management of village affairs.

"Sarah Browning," she repeated, cautiously, with the air of one prepared to temporize. "Well, of course every one

knows Sally Browning. Why, she was 'ousemaid at the Rectory for—'ow long was it, four years or five?"

"Isn't she there, now?" Angus asked.

"No!" the postmistress returned, and somehow succeeded in making a whole report out of her monosyllable. Her expression was a little coy, as if she asked whether this stranger was not poking fun at her. She obviously deemed it incredible that any one should believe that Sally Browning was still housemaid at the Rectory.

Angus misread the ingenuousness of one absorbed in local affairs.

"You mean that she *had* to leave?" he asked.

"Well, no, she didn't *'ave* to," the postmistress replied, still scrutinizing him warily. "She went to better 'erself."

"How long ago?" Angus inquired.

"Now let me think," the postmistress began, and did her thinking aloud in an immense paragraph of corroborative evidence, finally clinching her date as "three years last 'arvest," with triumphant parallel.

Angus was giving her little attention. Quite early in the postmistress's speech that approximate date of a little more than three years had loomed convincingly, and yet he remembered to have heard that Herbert had been in South Africa for seven. Could his mistress, then, have continued, or returned to her work, at the Rectory after her child was born? A fragment of Herbert's last speech welled up in his mind. "She was barely eighteen," he had said.

"How old would Miss Browning be now, about?" Angus asked.

"Ah! now that I *can* tell you," his informant said, pouncing on the opportunity for a display of accuracy, "for she was born the same week as my Lizzie, who'll be twenty-six come the nineteenth o' next month. Dear, dear, 'ow the time flies! Why, I remember . . ." Like most village folk in England, she was more eager to give than to receive information. She had no curiosity concerning

the unimaginable world whose affairs moved vaguely beyond the focus of her centered attention. To her the little village of Halton was a complete universe.

"But she hadn't . . . she didn't, then . . ." Angus interrupted her, and paused, unable to pose his question with the tact he felt was demanded of him.

"Adn't what?" the postmistress encouraged him, softly, her head a little askew in her lust for the delivery of knowledge.

"She—she was never in trouble of any sort, I suppose?" Angus asked.

The plump figure of the postmistress fairly quivered with emotion, and her voice dropped to a purring note that conveyed the ultimate expression of confidence. "N-no. Well, there, to be quite fair, she never was. We used to say as Sally knew 'er way about as well as most. Bless you, there was talk enough, one time. Sure to be with a good-looking wench like she was—more particular about seven or eight years ago, when there was a gentleman stayed at the Royal Oak one summer, as went off later to foreign parts, Africa, or somewheres, I heard. But nothin' never 'appened to Sally; leastways not as any one knows of. . . ."

But Angus, his head bowed confidentially over the counter of the little shop, was not attending. His knight-errantry was taking new shape. This good-looking wench who knew her way about as well as most, made no appeal to his sympathies. The feeling of boredom at the prospect of an immense and futile service to the wishes of Fuller Herbert, was growing upon him. He had, without doubt, now, another journey before him, and with no certainty at the end of it. In these three years Sarah Browning might have "bettered" herself more than once. Already he had received the impression that she was a young woman with a marked capacity for betterment.

"You can give me her address, I suppose?" he said.

A look of distress passed across the

face of the postmistress. "She went—I'm pretty near sure—to Southampton," she replied, and glanced distrustfully, almost with dread, at a vast collection of untidy papers that littered the rough shelves behind her.

"Don't you forward her letters?" Angus asked.

"Well, she did give me 'er address afore she went," the postmistress said, uneasily, "and I did forward one or two letters for 'er just at first, but there 'ain't been any, now, for years, as you might say—'er being an orphan out of an 'ome and 'avin' no people of 'er own, in a way of speakin'."

"Do you think you could find that address?" Angus said. "It's—it's rather important. There is—some money for her. . . ."

"Indeed!" commented the postmistress with her first sign of curiosity in the stranger's business.

A sudden spasm of impatience seized Angus. He felt that he could not endure another minute of inaction. He wanted passionately to be finished with this absurd "charge" of his; to find this confounded woman at once and be free to get on with the affairs of his own life. He looked at the horrid litter of papers on the shelves, and in his mind he pictured an immense and intricate research, lasting perhaps for hours, while he tediously examined the deposit that represented, Heaven knew how many years of scrupulous ineptitude. It was incredible that the postmistress could ever have destroyed a single document; not less incredible that she could ever find one.

"I must know her address," Angus exclaimed, almost fiercely.

And then occurred the first of many coincidences, if they were coincidences, and not due to some direct interference with the dull, habitual movements of natural law. For the postmistress, turning with a sigh of forlorn distress to the awful muddle behind her, let her plump red hand hover for a moment like the beak of a fortune-telling love-bird, and

then plunged with the convulsive jerk of an automaton at the very bunch of the litter, sere-edged and brittle in places, that contained Sarah Browning's address.

"There you are, then, young man," she exclaimed, on a high note of triumph. "Sarah Browning, the Ocean Hotel, Southampton. She went as chambermaid, I remember."

She glowed to a very ecstasy in the contemplation of her ability for accurate reference, positively flaunting at him the precision and reliability of her official aptitude for business method.

Angus turned with a long sigh of impatience to the obligations of his "trust." He had been in Southampton not many hours before. He had even noticed, half-consciously, the façade of the Ocean Hotel—a new building with an effect of conscious cleanliness and rectitude; well built and badly placed; staring its boast of efficiency across a poor street. He might, for all he knew, have shouldered Sarah Browning on the footway. And now he had to face all the hesitations and interruptions of a return journey, with no certainty of concluding his mission at the end of it. Only he felt that he must know, at once, how much farther he might have to go before that little bag of diamonds, snug and warm in his hip pocket, could be delivered. It was the uncertainty that irritated him. He saw himself tracking Herbert's heiress through England. But, no! In the train that night between Waterloo and Southampton he came to a definite resolve. If she had gone from the Ocean Hotel he would go to Devonshire and write to her. His responsibilities went no farther than that. It was absurd and impossible to undertake any more of these fruitless journeys. She must come to him. She was, though she was still unaware of it, magnificently rich. She would be fully compensated for all her trouble, whereas he could anticipate no reward—unless Sarah Browning were unexpectedly generous. And even then

he had a certainty that it was not in her nature to be generous.

That resolve, with all its promise of ease and finality, was an imminent goal to him as he bounded up the steps and burst through the solemn doors of the Ocean Hotel. He was panting with eagerness as he demanded the whereabouts of Sarah Browning from the flashily demure woman at the bureau.

"Oh, she's left here years ago," was the expected reply.

"I know, I know," assented Angus, "but where's she gone to?" He was too anxious to remark then, what he afterward recognized as the most important characteristic of the woman he was seeking. She was always remembered. Surely there must have been many chambermaids in service at the hotel since that gaudily staid woman in the office had first undertaken her duties. Yet she had shown no sign of hesitation when Miss Browning's name was mentioned. Though Sarah had left the place "years ago," she was remembered, instantly and with certainty.

"Oh, you'd better ask the manager," said the woman in the bureau, with a toss of her yellow head. She somehow managed to convey that it was no part of a woman's business to inquire into the ultimate destination of Sarah Browning.

The manager, when found, had an air of almost religious discretion. He seemed to summarize in his own person all the salient aspects of his own hotel. He might have been the model from which the place had been designed. He was so ostentatiously clean and precise, and barrenly efficient; and yet his pale-blue eyes with their sandy lashes had a slightly wistful look, as if he, too, was aware of being essentially the right thing in a wrong position.

He regarded Angus with a touch of practised but half-wistful inquiry.

"Yes, Miss Browning left here—ah—two years last April," he said, and added, as though to satisfy his own craving for the punctilious, "Ah—on the twenty-third."



"Where did she go to?" Angus asked. "She left her address, I suppose?"

The manager, disregarding the question, delicately picked his teeth with a quill.

"There was a lady here, a Mrs. Cresswell, who took a—ah—liking for her," he continued. "She—ah—found certain qualities in Miss Browning. We—ah—for the matter of that, all found certain qualities in her. She went back with this lady to—ah—undertake the management of a boarding-house in—ah—Sydney, Australia. Her address is, or was, three hundred and seven Pike Street, Sydney—ah—Australia."

Angus laughed. "That's a long way to go to find any one," he said.

The manager permitted himself no air of surprise. "It is, as you say, a long way," he agreed. "If I can—ah—help you in any other way . . .?"

But the manager's functions, so far as Angus was concerned, were now exhausted. He thanked him and went, almost light-heartedly. The little bag of diamonds still nestled confidently in his hip pocket, but it was outrageous to suppose that he could be called upon to deliver them in person to Sarah Browning, in Sydney. He would, however, do more than was actually required of him. He would send a cablegram to 307 Pike Street, prepaying the reply, although he could ill afford the expense, and request Herbert's unofficial legatee to communicate with him at once in Devonshire.

And then Fate, deliberate but persistent, caught him at the Central Post Office in Southampton, while he was, with a touch of dismay, disbursing the charge of his cable. A hand was laid on his shoulder and a pleasant voice said, "Now I call this the most astonishing piece of luck, Mr. Whitley."

He turned to confront Graham Dixon, the man with whom he had been in conversation when that fateful message had been brought to him at dinner on the night that Fuller Herbert had died.

"I wanted your address and couldn't get it," Dixon continued, with a friendly

smile. "Since I landed I have found that it will be necessary to send a man, an engineer for choice, out to our works in Sydney, and I judged from our talk on the steamer that you might be willing to take the job. And if you are, you're just the very man I want. Now will you come to my hotel and talk things over?"

Angus stared at him resentfully. "To Sydney?" he said. "You want me to go to Sydney? It's a devil of a long way to go."

For a moment he could not realize that Dixon was offering him what might prove to be a very promising job. He did not think of the job, but only of the "sacred charge" that was again being thrust upon him just when his resolve had relieved him from further effort. Dixon seemed to have come suddenly from nowhere, as if he had been the supernatural agent of Herbert, thrusting again upon Angus the awful urgency of that cursed commission.

Dixon did not appear to notice the gaucheness of the reply. "Sheer luck," he went on, evenly, as he led Angus out into the street. "Honestly, I don't know why I went into that post-office. . . ."

Angus listened without appreciating the detail of Dixon's conversation. He did not want to go to Australia. He had been in South Africa for two years, and now, if he were but given a little time, he would, he was sure, find a job at home. But he knew, even as he tried desperately to refuse Dixon's offer, that he would be forced to accept it. He could not oppose Dixon's suave confidence that he would accept it. It was, of course, a chance for him.

"In a sense, a position of peculiar trust," Dixon explained. "Things are not going right over there. We have our suspicions of the manager. . . . I chose you because I felt when I first met you that you were essentially a man to be trusted. . . . I should send you in the first place as an assistant engineer at a salary of two hundred dollars a month, and I want you to report to me, pri-



vately, on the general management. Later . . ."

"I must go home first, to Devonshire," Angus put in, and then realized that his stipulation was a form of acceptance.

"By all means," Dixon agreed. "Do you think you could be ready to sail in a fortnight's time? If an advance for your outfit would be a convenience, don't hesitate to call upon me."

So Angus went to Devonshire to meet that girl of his and to wait for the answer to his cable. And no answer came. Herbert had warned him to tell nobody about the diamonds, but he disobeyed that injunction so far as his sweetheart was concerned. She could be trusted; and together they revolted against the necessity for his going, and gave way not because they respected the sacredness of his trust, but because, when they examined the situation at their leisure, it seemed that to accept Dixon's offer was the shortest way to achieve their soul's desire. If things went well, she was to go out to him in a year's time.

And when, some two months later, Angus called at 307 Pike Street, to find that the boarding-house had changed hands again since Mrs. Cresswell had taken it, being now in a rapid decline under the direction of a drunken proprietor who had been too apathetic to reply to the cable (Angus saw it lying on the slabby hall table among a litter that reminded him of the country post-office), he shrugged his shoulders, patted his hip pocket with a nervous movement that was becoming habitual to him, and decided that he had done everything that was humanly possible. Sarah Browning had gone to Auckland, New Zealand, about eighteen months earlier. More than that the fuddled proprietor of the Pike Street boarding-house could not or would not tell him.

So Angus set his face toward his new work and toward the making of his fortune and the great day when his sweetheart should join him in the new world. He did not know that he was snapping

his fingers at Fate and that Fate had responded to the insult with a contemptuous smile.

It would be a mistake, however, to credit Fate or the spirit of Fuller Herbert with the entire control of Angus's career in Sydney. Even if he had never received that arduous commission of his, he would almost certainly have come to grief over the Dixon job. Muller, the general manager of the works, was too clever for Angus's straightforward habit; and Muller, from the first, had decided that he had no use for this young emissary from England. Muller played his own game with discretion and foresight, outwitting and outpointing the simple honesty of Whitley, from his preliminary explanation (apparently a frank and, considering his position, a generous statement) of the firm's affairs, to the day, five months later, when, with a well-assumed reluctance, he handed to Angus his month's notice of dismissal.

So far, I cannot trace any direct interference with Angus's fortune, but there can be no question that the result would have been different if he had been a free man. For the truth is that from the day he abandoned his pursuit of Sarah Browning at the door of the Pike Street boarding-house he was, in some indefinable way, haunted. He would pause in the conduct of the most intricate undertaking, bewildered with the sudden sense of an important duty recently overlooked, of a vast and overwhelming responsibility, incredibly, almost criminally, forgotten. Then the thing would take him with a shock of horror, so that he would stand startled and aghast, searching his mind for a memory of the essential duty culpably omitted. At other times the suggestion came to him vaguely, distracting his attention from his work, with cloudy thoughts of some object in life that was greater and finer than this petty preoccupation with the details of his chosen profession. At those moments he would pause, whatever he was doing, and stare blankly before him, as though his eyes were

strained to see, through the semblances of his material surroundings, the figure of the obsessing purpose that would drive him through the world in the pursuit of the self-confident, capable woman whose fortune rested so securely in his hip pocket. Only by a great effort of will could he return to his work, cursing Sarah Browning, the diamonds, and the memory of Herbert's commission. But Muller would note those fits of abstraction and make use of them.

And the haunting steadily persisted, presently adding another cause of discomfort to Angus's life. For it seemed that he was subconsciously aware of the written word, "Auckland" long before his eye could pick it out from a printed page. Whenever he took up *The Sydney Bulletin* he found himself constrained to hunt for that one name, and he could fix his attention on nothing else until he found it. Also, in the street, he would suddenly pause in his walk and look up to discover perhaps a bill of steamer sailings, or it might be the name of a café, but in either case the prominent word that had hailed him so stridently through the deepest abstraction was always that one word "Auckland."

Nevertheless, nearly five weeks had elapsed since his dismissal from the Dixon works, and, having sent the greater part of his salary home to Devonshire, he was sinking rapidly toward the social stratum of the beach-comber before he signed on as assistant engineer on the Sydney & Auckland packet. He had not, even then, surrendered his will to the power that was driving him across the world. He was merely relaxing into a condition of helplessness and apathy. He felt that luck was against him; that he would never make good, never marry that girl in Devonshire who so steadfastly and magnificently loved him. He went to Auckland rather because the name so persistently haunted him, than because he had the least hope of fulfilling his "sacred trust." It is certainly more than a little remarkable that from the moment he left Sydney his obses-

sion by the word Auckland finally left him.

He had a few hours' leave in the course of the boat's forty-eight hours' stay in port, and he went up to one of the better hotels in the town on the off chance of getting news of Herbert's heiress. He got it without difficulty. Sarah Browning had never served in that particular house; she had been desk clerk at the Imperial, the swell place behind the town, but she was remembered. She had left Auckland, however, "oh, twelve months or more," Angus's informant told him. "Went to America, to better herself."

Angus went up to the Imperial and discovered that Miss Browning's last known address was "The Mountjoy," San Francisco. He also learned from the cynical male clerk who had succeeded her that "Sally" had expressed her intention of marrying an American millionaire.

He had not made up his mind, then, to devote all his energies to that absurd quest after the fugitive heiress. The thought of it increasingly bothered him; it came between him and his every purpose, but no more than if it had been the memory of some rather important letter he ought to have written. It was the famous southeasterly gale that settled him. It is still talked about in Auckland. Incidentally, that gale wrecked Angus's packet, which turned turtle thirty miles out from land and drove him back in the company of a capsized life-boat to his point of departure. He was in hospital for three weeks, and in that time he had leisure to think things over. He reviewed his past from the moment of Herbert's death, and in his weak state he came to believe that the hand of destiny lay heavily upon him and that he would know neither security nor peace of mind until he had delivered Herbert's diamonds to Sally Browning. And once he had got that idea into his head, his duty became an obsession with him. He retarded his recovery by his eagerness to set about the business at

once and be done with it. In his quieter moments he still argued with himself, maintaining that no one could expect him to devote his whole life to the casual service that had been so unwarrantably thrust upon him, but his superstition had become stronger than any logic.

When I met him about fifteen months later in New York he had the eyes and the bearing of a fanatic. During the interval he had been "working his way" round the world. He had been in San Francisco and Los Angeles, Philadelphia and Chicago. He had served on tramp steamers, done odd jobs in the cities, "jumped the cars," and been near to total destitution once or twice, while he made his furious pilgrimage on the trail of the enterprising Sally Browning, who in her vigorous exploration of the road to wealth seemed to have been inspired by a mad desire to fly from the fortune that was so desperately pursuing her.

He had lost track of her in Chicago. She had left there under some kind of a cloud, and with a misplaced and, as it turned out, unnecessary ingenuity had obliterated her traces. For seven months Angus had earned his living in Chicago as a lift-boy, waiting impatiently for the clue that had come to him at last through the chance conversation of two passengers in his lift. At the sound of Sarah Browning's name the attentive lift-boy had suffered a transformation that must have considerably astonished his two passengers. He had stopped the lift between floors while he demanded particulars. He was no longer a servant, but a fanatic pilgrim who cared nothing for any man on earth if he could but fulfil his quest. Had he just received the clue to the finding of a quarter of a million dollars instead of the clue to getting rid of them, he would not have shown a tenth part of the excitement. I gather that he got his information without any hesitation. Perhaps that instinctive movement of the hand to his hip pocket had been misread? As a mark of gratitude he deposited his in-

formants on their proper floor, and then left the building and, an hour later, Chicago, without further ceremony.

He ought to have caught Sally Browning in New York. He had, as it were, short-circuited her trail, for she had been West again in the interval, and if he had had enough money for his fare he would have found her before she sailed for Liverpool. As it was, he jumped a freight, got hung up on a side-track, and missed her by twenty-four hours. When I met him he had just signed on as a fireman in a White Star boat.

I tried to dissuade him from that ignominy, but he seemed quite unable to give me his attention, refusing my offer to lend him the amount of his second-class fare, as if I were putting some tricky impediment in his way. I did not know then what was driving him, and I remember wondering if he had committed a crime and was flying from justice. He had much the air of a man haunted by terror and charging in panic through the least hint of obstruction. I could not be expected to guess that the lure which drew him was the longing to deliver himself of a fortune in diamonds to Mrs. Sarah Fulton at the Savoy Hotel in London. She had married her millionaire two days before she left New York, and had taken him to Europe for their honeymoon. The passengers in Angus's lift had been discussing her wedding when he had overheard them. The strange thing was that he should not have heard of her engagement earlier; but his prosecution of the quest had not led him to study the New York journals.

He has told me that he received his first real shock in the discharge of his precious mission when he spoke to the suspicious attendant across the counter in the Savoy foyer. He entered the place with no particular hope of reaching the end of his journey. The habit of asking for Sally—almost exclusively in the halls of hotels—had so grown upon him that he never anticipated anything but the usual reply. So far as he had thought about it at all, he had thought it prob-

able that the Fultons might have gone on to Paris, to Geneva, to Rome, to Moscow. He may have had visions of following them by way of the Trans-Siberian Railway to China and Japan. He was certainly prepared to do that if necessary. He had discarded every other impulse but this dogged pursuit of a fixed idea. And when the attendant told him that Mrs. Fulton was not only staying at the Savoy, but was at that very moment in the hotel, Angus was staggered. In a single moment he had to recast all his values. He was like a blind man who, having patiently worked in darkness all his life, suddenly receives the gift of sight and does not know what to do with it.

"Have you got a message for her?" the attendant asked, with a look of disgust at Angus's clothes. He had, as a matter of fact, forgotten to change them since he emerged from the stoke-hold of the liner.

The familiar sense of impediment braced him again. "A message?" he repeated. "By hell! yes, I've got a message for her." And his hand went back with his habitual movement to the little bulge in his hip pocket.

The attendant backed. "What name?" he asked, looking round for help.

"Angus Whitley," was the reply, spoken as if that, to Mrs. Fulton, unknown name was a combination to conjure with. "You let her know I'm here," he added, and, turning away from the counter, threw himself in his oil-stained canvas into one of the luxurious arm-chairs of the Savoy foyer.

They probably sent up his name to Mrs. Fulton, because they did not know what to do with him. Why she consented to see him is a deeper mystery. But Sarah Browning had much strange history behind her, and she may have thought it best, in those early days of her marriage, to be reasonably cautious. Her husband was out just then, and she hoped, no doubt, to deal with the intruder and get rid of him before Fulton returned. If he represented some less

creditable episode in her moving past, he might, she probably imagined, be rapidly and easily bought. For all Sarah's history that had been, in a sense, doubtful, was solely connected with finance. Since that one strange affair of hers with Herbert, ten years earlier, she had, as she might have phrased it, "kept herself respectable." A little shuffling of accounts, such as she had been guilty of in Chicago, did not, in her opinion, impeach her cherished reputation for virtue.

So she gave directions that he was to be shown up to her sitting-room, and to my mind the queerest aspect of the whole queer affair is the change that came over Angus when, at last, he realized that his goal was achieved. He had perhaps three or four minutes in which to grasp that fact while he followed the supercilious but distinctly nervous flunky through long passages and then up in the lift to the sixth floor. And his realization breaking, now, into a clear retrospect of his tremendous Odyssey, showed him, as he said, that he had been "a most almighty fool."

One enormous question posed itself to the extinction of all other issues. "Why," he asked himself, "had he not got rid of the diamonds and kept the money for himself?" He had only one answer; he had never thought of it. The possibility had, quite simply, never occurred to him. And at that eleventh hour it seemed to him that he had missed the chance of his life. He was, by instinct and habit, an honest man, but in his tremendous reaction he cursed himself for his stupidity. He even contemplated the theft as still possible. As he stepped out of the lift on the sixth floor he was reviewing the possibilities of turning back, of hiding himself in London, and disposing of Sarah's diamonds—at however great a loss—to some "fence" in the East End. Sheer inertia carried him on to Mrs. Fulton's room; that and his natural curiosity to see the woman whose life history had been his single study for more than two years.

And when he actually faced her the temptation passed. From the moment he entered Sarah's presence he recovered his sanity. The Angus Whitley of that interview was the Angus who had sailed hopefully enough from Cape Town in the autumn of '96. For the first time he was able to see the humor of the immense undertaking into which he had been so curiously led.

Mrs. Fulton must not be judged too hardly for her share in the culminating scene of Angus's tragic comedy. He began with an obvious but unfortunate reference to Fuller Herbert. With his return to sanity had come also a return to his appreciation of ordinary values; and he was intensely conscious of himself, he says, as being so absurdly "improbable," sprung out of nowhere, in his stoker's outfit, and appearing in an elaborate hotel sitting-room, with no other credential than a bag of uncut diamonds. No one, least of all the practical Mrs. Fulton, could be expected to believe in so unlikely an apparition. And then he must needs open with that unhappy reference to Herbert, Sally's one slip from virtue. Inevitably she scented blackmail from the outset.

"You've made some mistake," she said, with decision. "I've never known any one of that name."

"It's a long time ago," Angus admitted, with the natural but utterly misguided intention of proving his case. "Ten years or more. At Halton in Northamptonshire. You were in service at the Rectory."

Mrs. Fulton's face expressed contempt. "You've made some mistake, young man," she said. "I've never heard of the place."

For one moment he was staggered by her self-assurance. Was it possible, he wondered, that he had picked up the wrong trail, between Chicago and New York; that there were two Sarah Brownings, and that, after all, his travail he had found the wrong one?

"Were you ever at the Central in Chicago?" he asked, testing his clues.

Mrs. Fulton showed a faint shade of disconcertion. It may have flashed through her mind that this queer stranger was a representative of Pinkerton's, that he had ferreted out her complete life history, and that it might be as well to come to terms at once. She had little fear of the results of the Chicago affair; that was nothing more than a question of financial settlement.

"I may have been. Why?" she asked.

"And at the Mountjoy, Frisco?" he continued.

"I was—for a time. Why?" snapped Mrs. Fulton.

Angus heaved a long sigh of relief. This was, at all events, the right Sarah Browning. "Why? Oh, it's a long story," he said. "You've taken two years out of my life."

Sally's eyebrows went up, but her expression was entirely non-committal.

"Let's cut the story," Angus said, desperately, and produced the little leather bag from his hip pocket. "The essentials are that Fuller Herbert thought he had ruined you. He was crazy to make reparation, and he died on the boat coming home from South Africa. He made his will and all that, but he hadn't mentioned you in it for fear of his family making a fuss, so he handed over this bag of diamonds to me to give to you. He—he made it a 'sacred trust'; and I've followed you clean 'round the world to discharge it. It's taken me, as I said, rather more than two years." He paused a moment, watching the cautious, reserved face of the still incredulous Sally, and then emptied the contents of the bag on to the table in front of her.

Mrs. Fulton regarded the diamonds with infinite suspicion.

"What's that?" she asked, pointing to a little bundle of papers that had come out of the bag with the stones.

"The official certificates for the diamonds—to prove that they were not bought illicitly, you know," Angus explained. But the certificates were so

soaked with sea-water as to be practically illegible.

Sarah pursed her handsome mouth and steadfastly declined to touch either the stones or the papers.

"You're sure they *are* diamonds?" she asked.

"Quite sure," Angus returned, grimly.

"Where are you staying?" she said, and continued: "I still think there must be some mistake. I never knew any one called Fuller Herbert. But if you'll leave the diamonds here I'll have them tested to see if they are genuine, and if they are I'll write to you."

Angus wonders whether she was momentarily stirred to a thought of generosity; if she suffered a fugitive impulse to send him ten shillings for his trouble?

"I'm not staying anywhere," he said. "Write to me *Poste Restante* at the General Post Office. My name is Angus Whitley."

It seemed a good moment to get out, but Herbert's heiress checked him at the door.

"What about the bag?" she asked. "Aren't you going to leave that?"

"No, by God! I'll keep the bag!" Angus replied. "As—as a reward."

"Very well," Sally returned, calmly generous.

He has that bag still. It is one of his favorite jokes to produce it and to ask a new acquaintance how much he thinks that little leather bag is worth. His own answer is, "Two years of my life." But, then, as a successful man, happily married, he can afford to laugh now at his amazing Odyssey; just as in his security he can afford to attribute the change of his fortunes to luck. For, as he marched

into the Strand, with his head up, a free and, as he protests, at that moment a supremely happy man, he met Dixon, who had been looking for him for eighteen months, and now found him for the second time by a happy coincidence.

But I am not sure. I feel that the little leather bag represents far more than Whitley thinks when he jokingly says, "Two years of my life." I believe that those two years of his were not, as he implies, wasted. They brought him strength of purpose, powers of endurance, and much experience.

Nor can I convince myself that luck or chance was the final arbiter of his wanderings. The coincidences seem to me too many and too marked for that explanation. For my own part, I prefer to believe that the spirit of Fuller Herbert was always at Whitley's elbow during that long probation of his; that it could not seek its rest until it had achieved its perfectly futile purpose of reparation.

I must add a final paragraph to note that Angus never called at the General Post Office for Sarah Fulton's promised letter, so we shall never know whether or not it contained a postal order for ten shillings—the probable limit of her generosity. Also to say that he did once meet her again, twelve years later, at a great reception in a famous London house. She did not, of course, recognize him, and he did not think it tactful to recall their last interview; but he swears that the magnificent and now famous tiara she was wearing was composed of the stones that he had once carried 'round the world in his hip pocket.